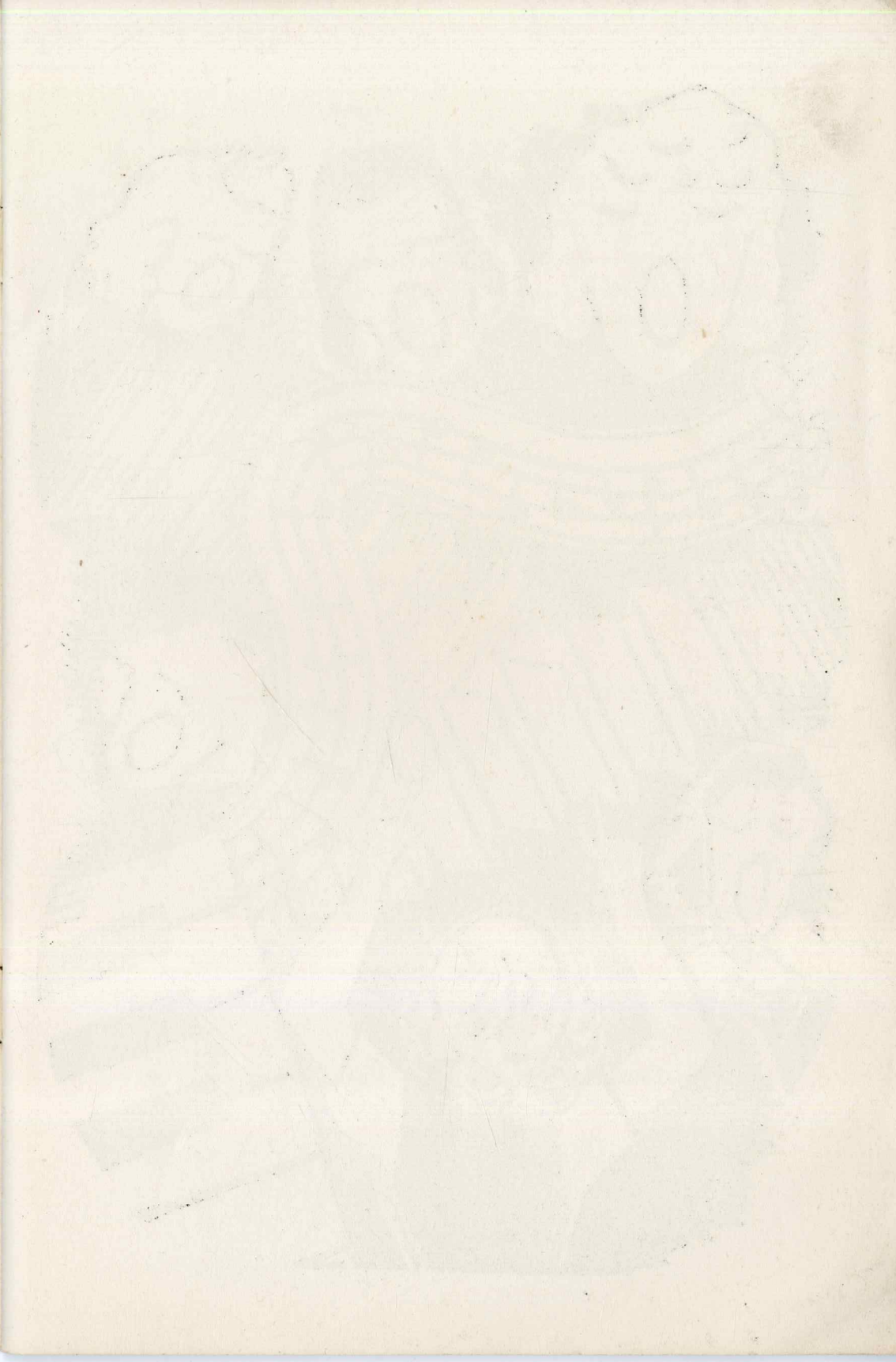
# The Tower



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# The Tower

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## *BIRMINGHAM*

Vulcan
swathed
in smog—
golden
molten
iron—
glistering
blistering
sweat—
hurrying
scurrying
pygmies
erect the
gigantic
romantic
story of
Steel.

—*Cary Sanford,* '38.

## *COAL RIDGE*

Grey
dust
rutty
roads
begrimed
men
fat wives
gossip
lies
hate
lust
children
and
More children.

—*Virginia Moore,* '39.

## *ANTI-CLIMAX*

They glared at each other.

She stood resolute; her nostrils were slightly flared and around her mouth was pale. "No," she said between clenched teeth. "No: that's final."

His gaze flickered away and he plunged his hands into his pockets. "I—I guess I'd better go, then." He hadn't meant to whisper.

She said nothing.

He turned on his heel and walked toward the door. Pausing, he looked back and said, "Of course you realize that this is goodbye?"

She stood quite still. The door closed behind him. She crumpled onto the couch and sobbed great dry sobs that shook her whole body.

Some moments later a step sounded on the porch and she sat up, brightening. He reappeared.

"I forgot my hat," he explained sheepishly. He fumbled with the doorknob, and half turned as if to say something else; then abruptly he left.

Standing on the porch, he could hear smothered bursts of laughter from the living-room. A frustrated "Damn!" broke from him and he strode off, biting his underlip.

—*Louise Phagan,* '39.

## *EVENTUAL SWAN SONG*

She sang a tired sing-song ditty
To the tune of noise in the city.
Tee-tee, te-dum, te-dum-dum, screech—
"That hellish ell! Buy a peach?"
Rattle, rattle, bee-beep, squeak—
"I haven't eaten for a week."
Rumble, rumble, scrape, scrape—
"Please, mister, buy a grape."
She sang a tired sing-song ditty
To the tune of noise in the city.

—*Ellen Fish,* '38.

# *RATTLES FROM ADDLED BRAINS*

## Rattle I

We're in it now! We're up to our necks in it. All summer long I felt it coming on, but who knew it would be like this when it struck! Mother never told me. And there's nothing you can fall back on—absolutely nothing. No learning, no self-respect, no nothing.

There's a dormitory on this campus (and I'm not saying which one) where the well-known midnight oil burns constantly—where student teachers wrestle nightly with lesson plans and things. And when the bout is over, lay them down to restless dreams.

Dreams, say rather visions—visions of great hoot-eyed creatures with arms outstretched and ears flapping. Supervisors they are, who never let up. Lumbering or wheezing, they always track us down. Horrible bespectacled monsters prodding around into our minds and souls—usurping our private lives. And now here they come in a body to rob us of sleep

A man's house is his castle. What would his sleep be? Gosh, this must be first class larceny.

## Rattle II

Here they come, the dear little ducklings. Don't look now, they're my pupils. Sauntering in as if they haven't a care in the world. I wish I could saunter out!

This is the tenth time I've asked that question and they still sit there like graven images—or would you say *grave* images? Writing on the board might help. Maybe my voice doesn't strike a responsive chord in their sensitive souls. Adolescents have souls, I hope!

Something must be wrong with my approach. I always thought I had a fair vocabulary and a gift for conversation, but it seems that practice teaching has made me into an imitation of the Goddess of Silence, and my students her devotees.

Oh! The flash cards! Perhaps that'll make genius burn—or at least glow. Elementary methods may work where psychology has failed.—Well, at last they've broken their vows. Half of the class whispered the answer to that last question. What would happen if I adopted the tactics of the M. G. M. lion and roared at them? Anything would be better than this endurance contest!

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Merciful heavens, that was a shock! Something has happened. My supervisor roared at me, a nice sedate roar padded in French vowels, but still something of a shock. Well, he seems to have waked them up. We're going to have a lesson after all. French vowels may be disconcerting, but they serve the purpose, thank goodness!

## Rattle III

He lounged lazily and smiled contemptuously at me, waiting, no doubt, to see what I'd do now that the supervisor was out of the room. My knees began to wilt and his smile broadened. Oh, he wanted to know what I'd do, did he? Well, this may be progressive education, but I'll use traditional methods if "motivation" fails!

"Take your books and move to the back seat, Tom." There! quiet but firm. You actually sounded as if you meant it, Miss Parker.

Suddenly I became panicky. Suppose he *didn't* go! He'd made no move—I continued to look him in the eye. Missionaries get away with that stuff in the face of a tiger; but I'm no missionary, and he's no tiger. Lord, I wish he were! A nice, tame, man-eating tiger. Not this leering creature!

Well—what do you know about that! He's actually obeying me!!!

—*Anonymous.*

## *THEN AND NOW*

Once I walked above the clouds,
Far removed from sordid earth.
I spoke of immaterial things—
Sweet sentiment, affected mirth.
Now I move with common man,
Keep my feet on solid ground.
I speak in cold and lowly terms—
Use harsh words, strong with sound.

—*Edna Weaver,* '39.

# *THE LEGEND OF THE FAN*

*adapted from the French*

Centuries ago it was the custom in China for ladies of high birth to wear a mask in public. This mask, made of wood, was painted with flowers, birds and butterflies to give it a pretty appearance. But in spite of its prettiness the ladies did not like it, for it was hot and uncomfortable.

It happened that Otaké, daughter of the Emperor of China, Fan Si, was judged by the court able at that time to be presented in society. For this occasion all the most skillful artists of the empire were called to Peking in order to design a wonderful dress for Otaké. When she had chosen one of the models, the embroiderers began their work, using yards and yards of gold and silver thread. Otaké was very excited at the thought of going to one of the biggest parties of the year given especially for her. But soon her joy flew away when she received her dress, for at the same time she received the dreadful mask. She went to her father and besought him to give her leave not to wear that mask. But Fan Si, though he loved his daughter dearly, was inexorable.

The night of the dance, Otaké dressed, and with a last sigh straightened her mask and went to the ball-room. First, in spite of her mask, she enjoyed the dance for it was a new experience to her. Soon, however, she began to feel hot and, profiting by a moment of inattention, she took off her mask and began to move it very swiftly before her face. She thought nobody was seeing her, but a lady had watched her movement and, thinking it was a good idea, did the same. Soon in the ball room it was possible to see all the ladies fanning themselves with their masks.

One of the servants noticed it, and after the feast, when everybody was gone, he pondered the matter deeply and decided it would be easier for the ladies if they had something which they could hold more easily than their masks. He worked all the night long and in the morning he brought to Fan Si the first fan. It was a very simple one, but Fan Si was so glad to have something more practical than the mask to give to Otaké that he gave a big sum of money to the servant and appointed him, henceforth, maker of fans for the imperial court. And soon the use of fans spread all over China, and later, all over the world.

—*Elia Lapierre,* '39.

*December, 1937*

# *GIFT*

The necklace lay where Petey had flung it. It sparkled in the moonlight of the clear, cold Christmas Eve night. Petey squatted silently and gazed at it. Guess it hadn't been good enough for her. Her old man could buy those things by the dozen and never know the difference. What a fool he'd been to go to all that trouble to get a Christmas present for her. Might've known that just because she smiled at him once in a while was no sign she'd take anything from him. She smiled at everybody.

Prettiest girl in 7B. Whole school, for that matter. A picture of her with her mother had appeared in the paper last Sunday and Petey had pointed it out in pride to his ma. "That's my girl, Ma. She stands across from me in line and I claim her."

Ma hadn't been much impressed. "She ain't your kind, Petey. Better stick to the gals like us, what aint got nothin'." Ma's wrinkled brown face was frowning and her voice was bitter.

Petey didn't agree with her, but said nothing. The next morning he'd slipped a nickel out of the cracked china dish on Ma's dresser and bought a big red apple for Anne. She had thanked him sweetly, but he noticed that at recess she just washed it and put it in her book satchel.

Petey eased off his haunches and sat cross-legged on the ground. He shivered as he felt the cold earth through his thin trousers. The necklace still glittered in the moonlight. He spat, skeeting through his teeth, and barely missed it. His knuckle was beginning to smart where he'd skinned it breaking the window. He shivered again. Reform school. If the cops found the old Jew and they caught him. Reform school. Bugs Toney had told him about reform school, how mean the big boys were to you. Stripped off your pants and everybody took a whack at you, and then afterwards. . . . Petey gagged.

All that because of a girl.

He could still see her as she fingered the necklace lovingly. "I'll have to ask Mother," she had said, and ran upstairs with it. The warmth and splendor of the room almost took Petey's breath. Through the looped-back drapes that separated this from the next great room, a big tree all lit up with colored lights glittered like nothing he'd ever seen outside of a department store window.

Anne was coming down the stairs with someone—her mother. Petey knew her from the pictures in the paper. She was a quick, jerky-moving woman with sharp brown eyes.

"It's a lovely gift, Petey, very lovely. But I'd rather Anne would not accept from you anything as expensive as this necklace. You're only children, you know." And she smiled, a swift fox-smile that showed her teeth and vanished without leaving a trace of itself.

Petey mumbled incoherently in his disappointment: "But I got it for Anne—I want her to have it—it's hers now—her necklace. She said she wanted it that day and I got it for her." His voice trailed off.

The eyes of Anne's mother grew black and snapping. "Don't stand there mouthing," she said, biting each word crisply. "It's too expensive for Anne to accept." She had inclined her head stiffly and said: "Good night—and Merry Christmas."

Petey shrugged, remembering. Damned hateful old thing! Fine Christmas this'd be. Bugs said that they hadn't even had oranges at reform school, and once Christmas had come and gone without anybody knowing it was even time.

Measured steps sounded somewhere behind Petey. That would be O'Brien, the cop on this beat. Petey moved over to where the necklace lay and put his foot on it. His heart seemed suddenly to have become loosed from its bearings, it beat so hard and wildly. Suppose they'd already found the Jew and he'd told. . . . The sickening remembrance of the dull thud of a body falling and the wet trickle that showed on its forehead made Petey gag again. But it had been such a *little* iron bar. . . .

"Hi there, young fellow! Sorta late for kids to be out, aint it?" O'Brien boomed.

"Yeah, guess so." Petey grinned feebly. "I'm just sittin' here thinkin'."

"Thinking about what old Santa Claus is gonna bring you, I betcha!" O'Briens joviality was like a cold wind to Petey's feverish imaginings. But suppose O'Brien was just stalling . . . suppose. . . .

"Well, Merry Christmas, kid. Better be heading home pretty soon, though." O'Brien walked on, swinging his stick.

Petey heaved a sigh. Guess they hadn't, yet. He watched O'Brien disappear. Then he took his foot off the necklace and snuggled further into the collar of his coat. He grew warm and cozy in spite of the cold. His thoughts whirled as he became drowsy.

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She ain't your kind . . . be a good boy, Petey. . . . They strip your pants off and beat your backend and then take you down in the cellar. . . . I'll have to ask Mother . . . Merry Christmas, the Jew had said . . . His knuckle ached . . . there seemed to be particles of the glass in it. . . .

Merry Christmas, then red on his forehead. . . .

Look, everybody, Petey washed his neck today . . . he hated that teacher . . . Anne was smiling at him over the apple . . . Wonder if they'd found the Jew . . .

Don't stand mouthing . . . What did they do to kids? . . . Lice and everything there . . . I'd rather she didn't accept it . . . from you. . . .

A burst of music from a momentarily open door brought him to with a start.

Maybe if he took it back . . . But the thought perished like a blown out flame. There was still the Jew. . . .

—*Louise Phagan, '39*

## *HURT*

Hurt is a thing
That pins one down.
I caught a butterfly once
To pin its beauty in.
It fluttered and squirmed
Then grew still.

—*Winifred Lion, '38.*

## *"TRAIN UP A CHILD——"*

Strange—there was no sound of gates clicking and shutting out childhood. No street marked "Old age—please turn here." Stranger still, there was no waving of a sentimental good-bye to an imaginary me. I simply stopped dead still in the middle of running down a dark street—running because I didn't want to be late for a student teacher-supervisor conference, because I don't like dark streets, and because I do like to run. Suddenly it dawned on me that I was only eight hours removed from being, in the eyes of the law, a woman—no, a young lady. Never did like that word "woman."

"Train up a child in the way she should grow and when she is old she will be a lady. Colored persons under the same conditions become 'women' " —a Southern doctrine carefully learned in the days of my youth.

Horrible thought! I'm not really supposed to be a child any more! I'm supposed to be a grown-up person, think grown-up thoughts, do grown-up things—Phew! Not that squabbling over the prettiest paper dolls and making mud pies is especially appealing, I simply can't get used to ME. A lady shouldn't stop by the nursery school and try out swings for three-year-olds, nor run, even when there are no street lights, stars, or moons so that she could be seen by stray dogs or squirrels. Perhaps I'm a hybrid—part of me (chronologically speaking) a lady, and the rest (mentally, et cetera) just a general mixture! Which isn't such a pleasing thought, either.

Well, for that matter, the whole situation is prickling with uncomfortable implications. My knees feel—woozy—and there's something out of place in my throat. I can't really be grown—not really! Surely it isn't more than a few years since my cousin and I, at the age of four, startled our parents with a naive explanation of our "naughty word" game; not more than a year since J. J. (my high school principal) stood me in the corner; not more than a month since I labored with Freshman biology!

"*Learn* to *like* the *things* you *do*"—J. J.'s pet saying, correctly italicised. Maybe I can like being a lady!

Even so, I'm twenty-one, and time staggers on!

—*Bunelle Hall*, '38.

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## *PRO TEMPORE*

There were no stars, no moon.
The sky hovered menacingly near the earth.
Two negroes plodded by the side of the road
Their way lit only by infrequent shafts of
Light from passing cars.

Black against black—
Black into black—

Negroes have no dawn, no day,
Only night.

—*Ellen Fish,* '38

## *CITATION FOR BRAVERY*

Shining medal,
A brave feat!
A young child
Shot down in
The street.

—*Cary Sanford,* '38.

# *KEEPING FAITH*

The Day of Atonement is over, the Fast of Repentance has been broken; and the last sweet strains of the *Kol Nidre* have died away. A feeling of comfort and happiness entwines itself around my heart.

Today, I say to myself, has seen me change from a child to an adult. I feel older and wiser for I have seen pain and grief banished by prayer and penance. I have seen faces bright with hope and reverence, heads bowed in humble adoration, and hands clasped, beseeching forgiveness for transgressions. I know that at last I have come to realize the true significance of *Kol Nidre* night and *Yom Kippur* day.

I had never before understood why people fasted from sundown to sundown. Yet, today I saw a woman faint because she had fasted. I realized why she was fasting; we all were fasting to keep faith with our God. We were trying in a simple way to show our love and fear of Him.

I had never understood before why the *Kol Nidre* was played at the evening service of *Yom Kippur;* yet when the sad sweet melody of this epic song reached my ears, I realized that the melody and words were written by a people who were persecuted and mocked. Their sorrow and shame were revealed in every note of this plaintive, poignant plea to God. The words, though dry and hard, portray the true sense of Atonement Day.

"Pardon our sins. Blot out our iniquities," chanted the choir.

But my religion is only one of many. I wonder if they do not all have the same basic theme.

Margaret found her God in church listening to an inspired young preacher. Katherine found her God as she knelt while taking Holy Communion. These two girls were Protestant and Catholic respectively, yet they are not the only ones who have found God.

Mary, an artist, sees God in the wonders of nature and the glorious panoramas of the seasons. Susan, a poet, finds her God while listening to the music of renowned composers.

Individuals, groups of individuals, races as a whole all have their religion. Surely we can overcome oppression, mockery, war and hate, if we keep faith.

—*Mary Sterne,* '41

## *ADOLESCENTS GO TO TOWN*

A gawky boy of about fifteen years strolled leisurely along Central Avenue with a plump young girl who appeared to be the same age. They were evidently engaged in window-shopping.

"Oh, George, don't you just love that blue and white hat!" exclaimed the girl.

"Where?"

"Over there next to that red one."

"Oh, is that a hat?"

"Why, of course it is. You men are so funny, tee hee hee," she ended with an adolescent giggle.

An awkward silence ensued, during which the boy stole glances at the girl, and she likewise watched him out of the corner of her eye.

Finally the girl ventured, "I just adore to look in shop windows, don't you? Especially when there's a pretty moon, but I guess that really doesn't make much difference on account of the street lights, but I like the moon when there isn't any other light, don't you, George?"

"Uh-huh."

"I think the stars are cute too, but of course they don't give as much light as the moon. It's *such* a romantic night." Sigh. "I don't believe you like the moon, do you, George?"

A clanging street car drowned out his reply.

"What did you say?" the girl asked sweetly.

"Nothing."

"Yes, you did too. Come on now, what was it?" she coaxed.

The exasperated boy almost shouted, "All I said was 'I like the moon', but I don't like to talk about it!"

Another long silence.

"George," the girl began sweetly, "do you mind if I tell you something?"

"Naw."

"You've got some of that hot dog left on the corner of your mouth."

The boy gave his mouth an awkward swipe with a large hand which was out of proportion with the rest of his body.

"No, George, it's on the other side. Here, take my hanky," she offered. After carefully watching the cleaning-up performance, she continued, "You can keep the handkerchief. I have lots more at home. You can have it as a souvenir of tonight. I guess I won't have anything in my memory book to remind me of tonight," she sighed.

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"Do you want my handkerchief?" the boy asked cautiously.

"Oh, George, you're so sweet. You're the first boy I ever took a handkerchief from."

"Aw, that's nothing at all. Why, I guess I've given twenty of them away," he boasted.

"What?"

"Uh, I mean, uh, I just can't keep the things. I lose them or something," he sputtered with a decided crack in his voice.

"Oh," the girl said softly.

Another long silence. The pair stopped in front of a women's apparel shop.

The girl exclaimed, "There's a dress just like the one Louise Alverson had on last Sunday, and she told me it cost six ninety-eight. Just look at the price tag on—" she stopped suddenly as her eyes, as well as George's, rested upon a large woman in the dark corner engaged in the great American gesture—tugging at her foundation garment.

The girl rushed the boy to another window and continued her chatter without a pause for breath, "And I never did like green dresses anyway, so so that's why my pink hat always was because I told Louise she did too and besides it makes her look too dark in anything except when she wears another color because I always did too, don't you think so?"

"What?" the boy drawled with a confused look on his face.

"Oh, nothing. You never are interested in the things I am." The girl had slowed her pace considerably now. "I guess you would like to talk about football," she suggested.

"Naw."

"Well, that's funny. The book said they always wanted to talk about the team."

"What's that?" queried the cracked voice.

"Oh, nothing. But men are *so* funny, don't you think so?"

"Naw."

A ten minute silence.

After walking around the block four times the boy said dryly, "Nine o'clock."

"Oh, so soon? Just when I was beginning to have a good time," sighed the girl. "Are you having a good time?"

"Yeah," the boy said doubtfully, glancing at his tired, aching feet. After a pause he said, "I guess we'd better go."

"I suppose so," the girl said, and then stopped thoughtfully. "George, isn't there something you want to ask me while I'm in this romantic spot?"

"I don't see anything romantic about it."

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"You silly boy! I think it's excrutiatingly romantic."

Another long pause followed, during which the two looked at each other painfully.

"George," the girl began timidly, "are you sure there isn't something you want to tell me?"

"Hummmmm, can't think of a thing."

"Now, Georgie, you're just teasing me. Think hard. Come on, now, tell me."

"Well, uh, will you, uh, I mean—won't you, uh, aw, doggone it. I can't say it," the boy said. The girl's eyes met his appealingly. The boy felt around in his pockets and finally blurted out, "Here—will you have a stick of gum?"

—*Kathleen Williams,* '34

## *SURREALISM*

### I

White feather,
Grey rat,
Belt of leather,
Tin war-hat—
Coward.

### II

Glaring light,
Blaring band;
Blurred sight,
Fumbling hand—
Night Club.

—*Cary Sanford,* '38

## *LINES COMPOSED IN CHEMISTRY CLASS*

In considering Nature's phenomena,
The compounds and their extraction,
The queerest mixture I have found
Is a man and his reaction.

His weight in grams is quite a lot,
Yet he always will deplore
If he isn't bigger than everyone else
And doesn't weigh a whole lot more.

The color varies from white to black
With varied hues in between
Sun-burn red and sun-tan brown,
A lighter shade when he's clean.

As a general rule men are active
And think themselves quite sport,
From high-powered speed in football
To speed in the way they court.

The kindling temperature varies much,
But rises to its height
When a sweet young thing is in his arms,
And the other guy comes in sight.

The density of man is quite colossal,
He just can't seem to realize
Why others don't think he's half as much
As he seems in his own eyes.

The use of man is yet undiscovered,
Though they'll never admit that's true,
And they become quite conceited
Over the simple things they do.

Now a woman sees right through a man
But lets him play his game.
She acknowledges all his little faults
And loves him just the same.

—*Mary Saunders,* '40.

*December, 1937*

# *MIDNIGHT BUS*

The bus roared along the dark highway, the motor groaning as it labored to pull the steep grade. It missed once, twice, faltered and finally stopped. Disgustedly the driver cut the switch, let the bus roll back to the bottom of the grade and tried to start again.

"Sounds like I'm outa gas," he muttered. "Nope, gauge registers half full." Then, opening up the tool chest, he seized some tools, got out and raised the hood and half-heartedly started to tinker the motor. He tinkered and tapped and stepped on the starter. He repeated the process, then shook his head and turned to the passengers, "Sorry folks, ain't no telling how long we'll be here. I can't seem to find the trouble." With that he gathered up a handful of tools and vanished under the bus, leaving the passengers to their own devices.

Mrs. John Davis Painter, III, sat twisting her handkerchief nervously. The hand of her tiny platinum watch pointed to 12:25 exactly. Could it have been only an hour ago since her life had been ruined, her home broken up? Never would she forget what Dave, her Dave, had done to her. A frown clouded her face. He wasn't her Dave and she wasn't his Mary. He had forfeited his right to her! And to think, it was the first time since their marriage that Dave had done anything to harm her happiness.

The truth was that Dave had been unfaithful to her. Wearily she wondered if she could get a divorce with the evidence she had. Opening her purse, she saw it again, the horrible thing that had opened her eyes to Dave's perfidy. It lay there along with her handkerchief and her cigarettes, looking very innocent.

Never had she thought that she would see Dave in such a disgraceful condition. He had gone to a Rotary club banquet and been later in coming home than she had expected. When the bell finally rang, she had rushed to the door, fearing to see the police, seeing Dave's still body on a stretcher —expecting anything except what she saw. There was Dave, a silly grin on his handsome face, leaning against the door jamb.

"Hi, Hon. Shee what I broughtcha. Some pitty flowerses." And with that he held up a bunch of carrots.

"John Davis Painter," she had said furiously, "you're tight." Even before she had married, she had never joined in the almost continual consuming of cocktails as did the rest of the debutante crowd. And now Dave had turned as irresponsible as the rest—he was tight, in fact, he was drunk.

Finally she had gotten him upstairs and to bed. She didn't arouse the servants because Evansville was rather small and servants will talk.

She had undressed him and started to hang up his clothes when it fell out. A gold plated vanity. It had been in his trousers pocket. At first she had thought it was one of her's but it was not. Then whose was it?

A quick but thorough search revealed a smear of lipstick—a vivid orange stain, flaunting personality, on his collar.

There was no doubt in her mind as to what she must do. She would go home and arrange for an immediate divorce. Dave would undoubtedly have a good explanation ready. So she had hurriedly packed a small bag and had dashed for the midnight bus. She would not stay there and let herself be persuaded against her will that it had been an accident.

Or could it have been an accident? The vanity might belong to a girl with whom he had merely danced—there had been women at the dance after the banquet. How silly—of course there *would* be women at a dance —mostly wives too, probably. Why she would have gone if she hadn't had such a beastly headache . . . lipstick smears awfully easily.

What if she had misjudged him. Most marriages, she had once read, were wrecked by just such small misunderstandings as this.

Well, she would call him up early in the morning and give him a chance to explain. Why, he didn't even know she was gone. Yes, she'd call him up very early.

## *EPISODE I*

Nat Arnold stared out the window into the darkness. God, it was dark out there. He looked down at his hands. Queer that they could look as normal and well cared for as ever. With a slight shudder he passed them nervously over his face. Wouldn't he ever forget that feeling—and that look of Uncle Cy's?

He glanced at his watch. 12:30. How long was this bus going to be here? He had to get to Circle City by 1:30. If the driver would only hurry. The minutes seemed to fly by with an audible sound.

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Oh, God, suppose they found Uncle Cy before he got to Circle City He felt in his pocket. Yes, the money was still there. Fifteen thousand dollars. Had it been worth it? Yes, of course it had. With all that money he could get a new start, see the world, or marry and settle down. He would go so far that even his wife, if he were lucky enough to get one, would never suspect how he had come by that little nest egg.

As he sat staring into the night he relived the scene he had enacted so short a time ago. Once again he was creeping into his uncle's room. Once more he was assuring himself that his uncle was really asleep. He had crept up to the little wall safe; only a few more moments and he would be through. Then a quick dash to the midnight bus, and on to the city where Chuck was to meet him at 1:30—gone without anyone's being the wiser. His uncle was used to his strange ways, he had often gone away unexpectedly before, and he would not miss the money until he recovered. It might be a week or even a month. How was he to know that Uncle Cy was not really asleep, that he hadn't been watching him all the time. He had had the safe door open when something warned him. He had turned, and there were those bright blue eyes staring at him. Uncle Cy hadn't said anything. He couldn't not since that last stroke; but that wouldn't stop him. There was only one way.

A few moments and it was done. The old man had died, gasping and choking. Nat had been panic stricken, but a realization of his situation had served to calm him. He tried to think what to do; a quick glance at the clock showed that he still had time to make the 12:00 bus. At all events Uncle Cy wouldn't be found until 1:30 when the nurse came in to give him his medicine—and by 1:30 he and Chuck—it was worth the risk. He would try it.

And now the bus had broken down, no telling how long before it would be fixed either.

He got up and proceeded quietly down the aisle, out the steps to the front where the driver was still under the motor tinkering with it.

"Say, how long will we be here, driver?" he asked, trying to keep his voice casual.

"Don't know, Mister. I think somp'n's wrong with the gas line. She ain't feeding right."

"Well, I think I'll walk down the road a piece."

The driver, grinning knowingly to himself, promptly forgot the incident.

Nat walked slowly until he rounded a curve, then he broken into a run, but only for a moment. Again he realized that haste would ruin all the luck he had already had. He had no plan of action. His one thought was to meet Chuck in Circle City.

The faint glow of headlights around another curve almost impelled him to seek cover among the bushes at the side of the road, but before he could act the car was in sight. Too late now. Suddenly he seized upon a plan. Why not try to bum a ride? He could explain that the bus was down and he just wanted to go back to Evansville. Then he could get some other way to Circle City.

Boldly he stepped into the glare with a suggestive thumb flourish. The car slowed, stopped. A head was thrust out the window and to Nat's amazement he heard a familiar voice saying,

"For crying out loud, is that you, Nat? This is Chuck. Get in here for God's sake—."

## *EPISODE II*

Al Delafield chewed on his cigar, squirmed in his seat and wished heartily that he had a good stiff drink. It was hard to sit here all alone, with nothing to do, nobody to talk to—and the thought of Maxine made him squirm even more. Some traveling men could get themselves into the biggest messes. Here he was, sittin' in this—this broken down buggy while Maxine probably was sittin' in the bus terminal gettin' madder and madder each minute. He thought dreamily of Maxine, her bright blond hair, her brilliant eyes.

She was pretty, but not as pretty as the little blond across the aisle would be if she'd get that "soured on the world" look off her face and smile. She had a pretty face, round and soft. Unconsciously he compared it with Maxine's rather hard features, and it was amazing how Maxine suffered from the comparison. He wondered if he could speak to her. No, he might get involved in something he couldn't handle. And he had to be free for the other date. After all he owed Maxine something. She had been pretty nice to him to have only met him last month. And stray blonds who look soured on the world are often the worst kind.

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Nevertheless, the little blond worried him. He couldn't get her off his mind. She just sat and stared into space, Hell, he wasn't any philanthropist set out to protect helpless girls. Probably have enough trouble protecting himself from Maxine. Sometimes he almost wished he had never met Maxine. She was getting downright bossy. Maybe he'd better start trying to end that affair instead of starting a new one. Why only the other day she'd—.

## *EPISODE III*

Alyce de Long (stage name for Smith) felt miserable. She wanted terribly to cry, but she couldn't here in this bus full of people. She looked down at the toes of her worn shoes and blinked hard. Two years ago she wouldn't have had to wear scuffed shoes, she thought bitterly. But two years can make a lot of difference. She thought wistfully of racks on racks of expensive shoes, and closets packed with pretty dresses.

Her's was the usual depression story. Good established family, with a father, who, like so many others, had thought that his business was invulnerable, and had been wrong. He had killed himself and her mother had died soon afterwards.

She had joined a stock company. Acting ability was about all private school had given her. She was no genius but she enjoyed the work, and at least she got paid for it.

A month ago she had become ill while the troupe was playing in Evansville. The manager had sent her to the hospital and the troupe moved on.

It had been necessary to operate, but after ten days she had left, anxious to be back at work—the manager was becoming impatient. She had a relapse and back again she went to the hospital. This time for a longer period.

Today had come this ultimatum. Either she would join the company as it left Circle City at 1:30 A.M., or the manager would be forced to give her job to the substitute. The manager was sorry, but there was nothing else he could do. Se had taken the twelve o'clock bus in Evansville.

She looked at the other passengers one at a time. They all looked fairly happy. She wondered what they would do if she were suddenly to scream or faint. Well, anyway she wouldn't try it.

Oh, Heavens, that big man across the aisle acted as if he wanted to speak to her. With a dreadful certainty, born of long experience, she knew that he would presently get up and come across to sit by her. Quickly she took off her wide brimmed hat and placed it beside her. Maybe that would stop him.

She watched with a kind of nervous fascination as he did get up, but he only reached to the rack over his head for something. She gave a sigh of relief that was almost a sob when he sat down again. She couldn't have stood it if he had come across. For the last two years, it seemed to her, she had been the continual target for all the traveling salesmen, the picker-uppers, and the drunks who fancied themselves roving Romeos. Her life was one long round of cold shoulders, saying no, and ringing for bell boys to eject the noisy gentlemen who insisted that she was their one and only, their pretty little flower. One had even called her his "pearl without price," his "jewel more priceless than gold."

She giggled faintly at the recollection of his face when he learned that she was one actress who didn't want to trade her virtue for a fur coat and who had no desire for an apartment or a pent-house.

She leaned back in her seat with a sigh, and tried not to think about Circle City and 1:30. To forget she indulged in romantic dreams in which she was a great actress and a man, handsome beyond all description, came from far away and claimed her heart and hand. She would retire from the stage at the height of her career and become a loving wife and mother. Now, what sort of a person should this mythical husband be, blond or brunette? She decided to compromise on a red head.

The midnight bus pulled into the Circle City train and bus terminal at exactly 2:45 A.M. An hour and fifteen minutes late. The passengers began to unload.

## *EPISODE IV*

Mrs. John Davis Painter, III, smiled sweetly at the driver and asked when the next bus for Evansville left.

"Not till six in the morning, Ma'am," the surprised man said. What on earth did she want to go right back for?

As she walked away she thought happily that she would have time to get home before dear Dave missed her. He always slept late in the morning.

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## *EPISODE V*

The head of the detective squad came up, puffing importantly, "You don't have a Nat Arnold on this bus? No? Well you ought to. He's a killer who's supposed to be escaping from Evansville to Circle City, probably by bus. He choked his old man—nope, uncle, to death. We got the alarm just a few minutes after it happened. The nurse or somebody went in unexpectedly and there the old guy lay. Sure this is all the passengers?"

"Well, there was one man, Brown, he had said his name was, who caught a ride back to Evansville, but he ain't the guy you want. He didn't look like no murderer. Naw, I don't remember what he looked like."

And miles away Chuck was explaining to Nat.

"Yeah, I went to the station and found out that the police were there, so I decided that I better scram for it and find you."

## *EPISODE VI*

Al Delafield descended the bus steps with misgivings in his heart. Maxine would be mad. She was so unreasonable about things like that. He glanced furtively around. A grinning red cap came up to him.

"Pawdon, Boss, but is you Mister Al Delafield? A lady done tole me to give you this, Suh," and he handed Al an envelope. In it was a single sheet of paper on which Maxine's address was written. A tensely penciled line underneath spoke volumes. "I don't live here anymore, see, Sap. And if I never see you again it'll be too soon!"

"And Boss, she tole me to say somp'n's else."

"What else, boy?"

"She tole me to tell you to go to Hell, beggin' your pawdon, Boss, and that she don't like men's what keeps her waiting. And she done gimme a dollar to do it, Suh." After which speech the apologetic porter got another dollar.

Al thought vaguely but interestedly about the blond.

"Yes, Miss. Train 42 pulled out an hour and ten minutes ago. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, thanks." So they had gone. She was alone. The terminal with all its many people suddenly turned into a whirling mass and Alyce fainted.

In a few minutes she opened her eyes. She gazed questioningly about. She was in the manager's office and a stranger was administering something out of a bottle. No, he wasn't altogether a stranger. She recognized him as the man with the cigar on the bus. The one who had squirmed so much and who had evidently wanted to speak to her.

"How did you get here?"

"Oh, I was close to you when you passed out, so I told 'em I was your brother. Somebody had to take care of you."

"Oh, big brother stuff," she said impatiently.

"No, I—say, how long has it been since you had something to eat?"

"Oh, a couple of hours." She tried to be nonchalant, but visions of huge steaks, smothered in onions and drowning in gravy rose before her.

"No, it's been two days," she confessed.

"Say, that's tough. Come on and I'll stake you to all you can stow away."

"No!"

"Aw, now, come on. Don't be like that."

Alyce struggled to get up, but she was so weak she couldn't manage it.

"Aw, you poor kid. Why don't you tell Al all about it." Awkwardly he put his arm about her shoulders to support her.

Alyce was amazed at herself for feeling no indignation, no anger.

Al patted her shoulder again. Gee, she was a sweet looking kid with those big, scared blue eyes of hers, and that pale, thin skin. She looked so helpless, too. He checked himself with a start. Huh, in a few more minutes he'd be proposing. Ha, that was a laugh. Al Delafield married. He looked at her again. Plainly she was close to tears.

Roughly he pulled her to her feet and growled, "C'mon, I'm not gonna hurt you. What you need is food."

Over their dessert, pie and coffee for him, fruit for her, he put the proposition to her.

"You see, it's like this. You've got no job, no money, no home. I've got no sweetie, but a darn good job and home. How about it?"

Alyce took in all he had to say with a feeling of futility and lostness. Why two hours ago she would have ignored him completely, but now—.

"I've got a nice little apartment just big enough for two. No one will ever suspect. You can even tell the landlady we're married if you want to."

Where, oh where, was the career and the beautiful redhead who would win her heart and hand?

"And I'd be good to you, honest Babe."

Some come down from a great actress.

"You won't ever regret it, Alyce."

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Yes, she would regret it the moment she said yes. But what else to do? No job, no money, no friends, and Al looked fair enough. Maybe she had been a Puritan long enough. She said yes with eyes staring defiantly into his, but she couldn't help sighing a little for the career and the red head.

*EPISODE VII*

The driver, checking in at the office, replied to the questions of a fellow driver.

"Yeah, about an hour and a half. Had a clogged gas line."

"Kinda hard on the passengers, huh?"

"Naw. People that take the midnight bus ain't ever in a hurry. An hour and a half wait don't mean nothin' to them."

THE END

—*Virginia Moore*, '39.

## *THE TOAST*

Blood-drinkers!
Feasters on human flesh!
Guzzle and glut until you die at the table of war.
Slice your shining blades into rare hearts.
Send your sons to be blown into eternity, gaily
Bedecked and festooned, with garlands of their
Guts 'round wrists and necks.
Drain dry your daughters!
Frustrate them into sere old women!
Laugh, and feast, and love, and glut!
Behind you stands your silent partner—
DRINK UP, GENTLEMEN!

—*Cary Sanford*, '38.